

Happy July 4th

July 4, 2009

Greetings!

Happy Fourth of

July! As you celebrate with your family and friends, I want us all to remember our veterans, the men and women who served our country and fought for our independence. And equally important, we honor those men and women who continue to fight for our freedom around the world today.

On Wednesday July

1st, I had the honor to celebrate the groundbreaking for the critically important Inpatient Mental Health Center at the VA in Palo Alto. The staff of VA Palo Alto is second-to-none and the work done at this facility for our veterans is work of service, dedication, and honor. The VA Palo Alto serves our veterans after they have served our country and they truly "put veterans first."

In Palo Alto we're

fortunate to have one of the four Polytrauma Centers in the country, along with a National Center for PTSD and residential programs for men and women who suffer PTSD. In addition, VA as a whole has increased its Mental Health practitioners by 3,800 bringing the total to 17,000 – making VA the largest provider of mental health services in the entire nation.

During the past two

years, Congress has accomplished a tremendous amount for our veterans. We have voted for historic increases in veterans' health care and benefits programs, totaling nearly \$12 billion to meet the needs of returning veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan. The importance of healthcare for our veterans cannot be overstated, especially with so many of our Iraq and Afghanistan veterans serving two or more deployments.

Just last week, I voted for and the House passed two extremely important bills for our veterans. The Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act authorizes Congress to approve investments in Department of Veterans Affairs medical care one year in advance to provide time for the VA to plan how to deliver the best care to an increasing number of veterans with increasingly complex medical conditions.

We also passed, The Women Veterans Health Care Improvement Act which will expand and improve VA health care services for the 1.8 million women who have bravely served their country. This bill calls for the enhancement of PTSD treatment for women, the study of barriers to women veterans seeking healthcare, and medical care for newborn children of women veterans. Both bills have been sent to the Senate and I'm eager to see them passed and then signed into law by President Obama.

As Congress focuses on repaying our veterans, I was thrilled to participate in the groundbreaking for this new facility. The VA's new Inpatient Mental Health Center is an extraordinary building that includes design elements meant to aide in the healing process. Therapeutic colors and textural palettes have been selected by clinicians. Patients will be able to walk through landscaped gardens and enjoy the natural light shining through almost all areas of the building, signaling a new day for our veterans.

This is not just another building. It is a health center and a place of healing for our veterans who have put our country first. It demonstrates our unending gratitude for their brave service and is just one more step to fulfilling our mental health obligation to our nation's veterans.

I will continue to work hard in Congress for each and every one of you. As always, I rely on and value your thoughts and ideas on the issues you care about, so please let me hear from you. Visit my website at eshoo.house.gov to send me an email.

Sincerely,

Anna G. Eshoo

Member of Congress